
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Property Address: | 1401 New York Avenue, NW | X | Agenda |
| Landmark/District: | Hecht Company Warehouse | | Consent Calendar |
| | | X | Concept Review |
| Meeting Date: | February 28, 2013 | X | Alteration |
| H.P.A. Number: | 13-065 | | New Construction |
| Staff Reviewer: | Steve Callcott | | Demolition |
| | | | Subdivision |

Antunovich Associates Architects, representing Douglas Development, seeks conceptual review for removal of a one-story addition and construction of a six-story parking garage adjacent to the Hecht Company Warehouse.

Property Description and History

The Hecht Company Warehouse is one of the finest examples of Streamline Modern design in the country, embodying the machine age aesthetic of the 1930s. When completed in 1937, it was heralded for its pioneering design and is now nationally recognized for its early, innovative and extensive use of glass block. With its rounded corners, prismatic tower, glazed black and buff colored brick alternating with glass block, the building was a striking addition to the light industrial area where it was constructed. The Hecht Company was originally founded as a family general store in Baltimore in the late 1800s and expanded into a successful chain of department stores; the first Hecht store opened in the District in 1896 and grew to become one of the city's most important retailers. The warehouse was a major company expansion built to centralize its distribution operations and to increase stock and efficiency.

The 440,800 square foot site is bounded by New York Avenue on the north, Okie Street on the south, Fenwick Street on the west and 16th Street on the east. The historic warehouse complex occupies the western half of Square 4037.

At the time of listing in the DC Inventory in 1992, the warehouse was comprised of five sections: the original six-story building at the corner of New York Avenue and Fenwick Street (1937), a six-story addition to the north (1948), a four-story addition and one-story enclosed loading dock to the east of the 1937 building (both 1961) and a one-story loading dock addition to the rear of the 1961 additions (1986). All but the 1986 addition have a continuity of design and were determined contributing to the landmark. The 1986 addition, and several additions along 16th Street at the eastern edge of the site constructed in the 1990s after the designation, are non-contributing.

Proposal

The applicant's master plan for redevelopment of the site is composed of three components: converting the warehouse to office use, constructing an above-grade parking garage with ground-level office and retail spaces, and developing the vacant eastern portion of the site for commercial or mixed use. In order to improve circulation around and through the property, a new 80' wide, north-south right-of-way, to be called Hecht Avenue, would be cut through the site just east of the four-story 1961 addition to the warehouse.

The rehabilitation plan for the warehouse is still being developed in consultation with HPO and interested preservation stakeholders. One of the primary issues being explored is the replacement of the building's distinctive glass block, many of which have cracked and become clouded as the thermal seals between the halves of the units have failed. In 1992, deterioration of the glass block in the corner tower

required complete replacement and reconstruction of that portion of the building; the remaining units have since deteriorated to the point where they will require similar replacement and reconstruction. The applicant is currently working with Corning Glass to explore options for new blocks that would be based on the appearance of the original units and that would also improve visibility out from within the building. Once mock ups of the replacement units are installed for evaluation in the next month or two, this and other aspects of the building's rehabilitation will be forwarded to the HPRB for review.

In this review, the applicants are primarily interested in obtaining the Board's direction on the design of the new parking garage. The garage would be located to the east of the new road through the site. It would read as a six-story building rising to a height of approximately 78 feet (84' to the top of the corner towers); the seventh parking level would be open to the sky behind the parapet. The ground level would incorporate the one-story black brick façade of the 1961 addition, with the blind brick panels converted to storefront windows. The aesthetic of the garage would be industrial in vocabulary, with open (unglazed) metal-framed windows and a strong horizontal emphasis, clad in light colored brick and dark accent detailing. A pedestrian bridge would span over the new road from the second floor of the garage to the courtyard at the rear of the historic warehouse. The garage has been designed to be convertible, in whole or in part, to residential or office use should the need for on-site parking be reduced.

The third component of the redevelopment, on the eastern portion of the property, has not yet been developed and will be forwarded to the Board at the appropriate time. While not physically connected to the historic portion of the warehouse, it will remain part of the landmark lot and subject to review by the HPRB.

Evaluation

The parking garage has been designed to relate to, but be distinguishable from, the historic warehouse building, with a similarly strong horizontal emphasis and industrial aesthetic. While of a similar (albeit slightly lower) height, the physical separation created by the new north-south road provides needed breathing room for the original structure to remain the dominant element on the site. The new building will read as an independent and detached structure, but one that clearly takes its design cues from the historic building. Collectively, they will form a new and complementary composition.

The four- and one-story 1961 wings to the building are identified as contributing to the significance of the landmark based on their continuation of the original structure's aesthetic. In its size and simplicity, the one-story wing is the most rudimentary of the additions, simply continuing the black glazed brick base of the complex as a way to conceal an open loading dock. Arguably, its value is primarily aesthetic in that it extended the horizontal base of the building and concealed the loading from public view on New York Avenue; the expansion of the Hecht's complex as a retail distribution facility is well documented by the other additions. Modification and removal of a portion of this element will not fundamentally affect the character or integrity of the complex, and reuse of the glazed brick wall as the base of the new garage will preserve its most distinctive feature.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the following to be compatible with the landmark and consistent with the purposes of the preservation law:

- *the proposed site plan, including the partial removal of a portion of the 1961 addition's New York Avenue façade for creation of a new road through the site;*
- *retention and reuse of the one-story façade of the 1961 addition, with the remainder of this addition to be removed;*
- *the conceptual design for the parking garage.*